

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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INTERVIEW OF: Commander Bruner, USN

EXAMINERS: Tom Roth-Roffy, Office of Marine Safety
National Transportation Safety Board

Barry Strauch
National Transportation Safety Board

1 P R O C E E D I N G

2 (3:22 p.m.)

3 MR. ROTH-ROFFY: Okay, the time is now about
4 fifteen twenty-two, and it's Monday, the 18th of March.
5 My name is Tom Roth-Roffy. I'm with the National
6 Transportation Safety Board. Also here joining in the
7 interview is Mr. Barry Strauch of the NTSB. And we're
8 here to interview Commander Bruner. Welcome,
9 Commander.

10 CDR. BRUNER: Thanks.

11 MR. ROTH-ROFFY: Barry, I'll go ahead and
12 turn it over to you to start the questioning.

13 MR. STRAUCH: Well, we are here as part of
14 the investigation of the Greeneville collision with the
15 Ehime Maru and one of the issues that we're looking at
16 is CO selection and training. We understand that you
17 are involved in PCO training, so we'd like to ask you
18 questions about that.

19 CDR. BRUNER: Sure.

20 MR. STRAUCH: That's the purpose of this
21 interview.

1 MR. ~~ROTH-ROFF~~STRAUCH: Could you kind of
2 just walk us through, first, your background, starting
3 with your undergraduate education and walk us through
4 the positions you've held to where you are now?

5 CDR. ~~STRAUCH~~BRUNER: Sure. Undergraduate
6 education. Let's see. I have a Bachelor's Degree in
7 Civil Engineering with an emphasis on Structural
8 Engineering from -- State University, 1980. I have two
9 Master's Degree; one is OSHA and one in Meteorology
10 from Naval Post Graduate School, 1988. Other than Navy
11 Professional Schools, that's my educational background.
12 I came in the Navy in the NUPAC Program in 1979.
13 That's a program where they give you money to go to
14 school, but you don't really do anything. My last two
15 years in college.

16 As soon as I graduated from College, then I
17 went to OCS and went through the training pipeline to
18 my first ship. I was Junior Officer and the Weapons
19 Officer on board USS Pollock for a total of three
20 years. That was in San Diego, from 1982 to 1985. Then
21 I went to Naval Post Graduate School for two years.

1 Was the Department Head, the Navigator and Operations
2 Officer on board the Mary Ellen -- from 1988 to 1991.
3 I became a Company Officer at the Naval Academy from
4 1991 to 1993. I was Executive Officer on USS Newport
5 News from 1993 to 1995. I went to the Pentagon where I
6 worked on the Navy Staff from 1995 to late 1997 and
7 then went into the Prospective Commanding Officer of
8 Pipeline. I was Commanding Officer of USS Ford of the
9 Gold Crew. It's a -- submarine based in Bangor,
10 Washington from July of 1998 to March of 2001. And
11 I've been in the job as the SUBPAC, Prospective
12 Commanding Officer, since that date. So it's a year,
13 almost a year exactly, that I've been in the current
14 job.

15 MR. STRAUCH: And what are you
16 responsibilities in your current job?

17 CDR. BRUNER: Primarily, there's two PCO
18 Instructors and the PCO is the Prospective Commanding
19 Officer Instructors. There's one on the east coast and
20 he works for Admiral Rosenbaucher (ph) and the one on
21 the west coast, that's me, I work for Admiral Paget

1 (ph). I'm not sure how much you know about the way the
2 Navy works, but there's two called the Type Commanders;
3 one guy in the pack and one guy in the land.

4 So there's two of us and it takes two to
5 teach the course because when we go to sea you have to
6 have one instructor on each submarine and you have to
7 have two submarines so that you can shoot torpedoes at
8 each other, so there's two instructors and probably the
9 best way to answer the question is to tell you the way
10 the course runs.

11 The class is about ten weeks in length. It's
12 made up of four weeks in the classroom where we teach
13 from basic to advanced tactics. We try to get guys up
14 to speed on things that have changed since they went
15 ashore from Executive Officer tour two to three years
16 prior to that. That's four weeks. We actually take
17 them to the tactical center and they simulate driving a
18 submarine and simulate shooting torpedoes.

19 Then we go to sea for about two and-a-half
20 weeks. Anywhere from two to three weeks, depending on
21 which class and where the class is located and, while

1 we're at sea, we actually shoot torpedoes. Each
2 Prospective Commanding Officer shoots five torpedoes,
3 real torpedoes. They don't have a warhead, but
4 everything, with the exception of the warhead, is
5 exactly the same.

6 We focus on the basic mission areas that each
7 Commanding Officer is probably going to have to do or
8 may have to do during his command tour, so we do all
9 those kinds of exercises and then we come back in. We
10 reconstruct and debrief each one of those torpedo shots
11 so basically it's a training opportunity that, to get
12 the most out of it, we really milk each one of those
13 things for all we can because it costs a lot of money
14 and takes a lot of time.

15 When we're done debriefing them, then each
16 Prospective Commanding Officer gets briefed in, what we
17 call, Staff Briefs and it's -- for example, Captain
18 Kyle, I know you've been talking to, would come and
19 tell them, hey, these are the recent issues we've seen
20 in a specific fleet in my realm of expertise. So, you
21 know, it's one of those -- these are some mistakes for

1 example. These are some mistakes guys have made.

2 Don't make these mistakes. You know, we're seeing a
3 trend in this direction. So -- and good things too.
4 It's not just bad things. And that takes about two
5 weeks and that finishes up the ten week course.

6 So, my job is to plan, implement that course.

7 I am the instructor and actually teach probably
8 seventy or eighty percent of the classes, but I'm also
9 the guy that plans all the underway operations. I'm
10 the guy that actually is out there to make sure they're
11 done safely and I'm the guy at the end of the day that
12 tries to make sure that those PCOs are taught what we
13 think they need to know.

14 In reality, it's not so much taught, because
15 they should already know it, but it's more of a
16 refresher because they haven't been at sea for two or
17 three years. So it gets them back up to speed. Does
18 that answer your question.

19 MR. STRAUCH: Uh-huh. How many people are in
20 each class?

21 CDR. BRUNER: The smallest -- I've taught

1 four classes -- the smallest classes had eight students
2 and the largest classes had twelve.

3 MR. STRAUCH: And each one is ten weeks you
4 said?

5 CDR. BRUNER: Yes, sir. So it works out we
6 teach a new course every quarter. I happen to be
7 between classes right now, but within about three
8 weeks, I fly back to the east coast and I start
9 teaching a course back in Groton, Connecticut.

10 MR. STRAUCH: That's where they're conducted?

11 CDR. BRUNER: Well, just this -- we swap it
12 and then the next quarter, which starts in June,
13 actually starts in the beginning of July, we'll teach
14 out here at PAC so that the guy on the east coast has
15 to fly out here for a quarter and the guy on the west
16 coast has to fly back there for a quarter so that we,
17 you know, get both guys there to teach the course.

18 MR. STRAUCH: So, you've had forty or so
19 students come through?

20 CDR. BRUNER: Uh-huh.

21 MR. STRAUCH: How would you rate them in

1 terms of the skills you'd like to see in a successful
2 CO, the forty students?

3 CDR. BRUNER: How would I rate them. They
4 all -- all of the guys that have come through the class
5 have demonstrated the minimum tools to succeed in
6 command. None of them have not.

7 MR. STRAUCH: Have you seen any stand out one
8 way or the other?

9 CDR. BRUNER: We had one fellow two classes
10 ago now, three classes, actually, it's class sixty-
11 eight, that in three different occasions demonstrated a
12 hesitancy to make a decision when a decision had to be
13 made. So he is the closest, I would say, to a stand
14 out. You're saying: Is there anybody that's an
15 abnormal data point, sort of speak, right?

16 MR. STRAUCH: Right.

17 CDR. BRUNER: Right.

18 MR. STRAUCH: Good or bad.

19 CDR. BRUNER: Right. There have been a
20 couple good ones too, but in his case, the land PCO
21 instructor and I both spent a lot of time with him and

1 we kept him longer after the class was over with then
2 we worked with him to get his skills back up. And then
3 we also explained our concerns to our two Type
4 Commanders and he has had some extra attention from the
5 Type Commander and the Type Commander's staff to make
6 sure that he was passed.

7 MR. STRAUCH: Now, when you and the other
8 instructor got together, were you asked to do that or
9 is that something you did on your own because you
10 thought that was important to pass that information on?

11 CDR. BRUNER: It's something we made the
12 decision to do, but I mean it's our job. If there's
13 any doubt that a guy's ready to go to command, we will
14 bring it up and talk to our bosses about it and that's
15 what we did.

16 MR. STRAUCH: That's something you're
17 expected to do?

18 CDR. BRUNER: Yes, sir, absolutely.

19 MR. STRAUCH: The first class you taught was
20 in March of 2001?

21 CDR. BRUNER: Yes. It actually started like

1 April the third or something like that. It was an east
2 coast class.

3 MR. STRAUCH: Have there been any changes in
4 the curriculum as a result of any of the incidents that
5 the Greeneville has had, starting from the one in
6 January or February, right before this one?

7 CDR. BRUNER: Yeah, there have been. There
8 is at least two things that quickly come to mind. One
9 is we have a Greeneville Case Study that the PCO
10 Instructors specifically teaches that covers all of the
11 issues and the operation risk management issues
12 associated with the Greeneville collision.

13 I'm the guy who teaches that. It's more of a
14 seminar than it is a lecture, but it takes about an
15 hour to an hour and-a-half to go through the entire
16 thing. That's one thing. And the other -- I would say
17 the second thing is -- is we've tried to focus and make
18 sure that the guys, the students, are proficient in the
19 basic submarining skills. You know, ship handling,
20 driving the ship. So we focus more on that, for
21 example, than we used to. And that was partly as a

1 result of the Greeneville.

2 MR. STRAUCH: So the changes are the new case
3 study and more of a focus on fundamentals of submarine
4 operating?

5 CDR. BRUNER: Yes, and the decisions that go
6 into those fundamentals.

7 MR. STRAUCH: Uh-huh.

8 CDR. BRUNER: Almost a risk-management focus.
9 For example, it's easy to be the Captain on a
10 submarine when you're on the surface and you have
11 unlimited visibility and there's no contacts out there.
12 You can just sit up there and smoke your cigar and
13 smile and everything is good. But, when things start
14 to go bad, from a basic submarine viewpoint, what does
15 the Captain do?

16 I mean, in some cases, there might be
17 something that he would put into place to protect the
18 ship as a result of something else that's gone down.
19 For example -- what would be a good example --
20 Visibility begins to decrease. That's probably a
21 perfect example. Well, what's the captain do to make

1 sure his ship is still safe? There are lots of things
2 he can do, right?

3 MR. STRAUCH: Uh-huh

4 CDR. BRUNER: So that type of basic emphasis
5 is -- we've focused more on that than probably we have
6 in the past.

7 MR. STRAUCH: Where you told what objectives
8 to bring out as a result of the Greeneville collision
9 or was that something you developed on your own?

10 CDR. BRUNER: I think no one ever said,
11 "Bruner, you shall do the following things," but I've
12 been to enough meetings on the Greeneville that I knew
13 what the issues were and I've taken those issues and
14 rolled them into the class. And, I mean, I've been
15 given some oversight. Captain Kyle wrote a power point
16 on the Greeneville. I very, very detailed power point.
17 Actually, I don't think he wrote. Some of his guys
18 did, but he buffed it up. I took his product and
19 rolled into the PCO course and changed it slightly to
20 focus on what is important to the PCOs. -- might be
21 important to the navigator down on the waterfront, for

1 example.

2 So, the answer is yes and no both.

3 MR. STRAUCH: What I'd like to do is go
4 through a couple of objectives and just ask you how
5 they were incorporated into the PCO class.

6 CDR. BRUNER: Sure, go ahead.

7 MR. STRAUCH: For example, getting Junior
8 Officers to be more assertive if they're not happy with
9 the CO is running things. How is that taught in your
10 case study and the class?

11 CDR. BRUNER: That falls under, what we would
12 call, forceful back-up and how do you teach and train
13 forceful back-up and we talk about how do you do that.

14 Okay, if you were a Captain, going to be a Captain,
15 the way we would typically work it is during the case
16 study, when we look at the Greeneville as a case study,
17 but there's about twelve or fifteen of them that we
18 typically look at. We pick a case study like
19 Greeneville and, for example, one of the details is
20 they didn't really take a good high look over the
21 waves, right?

1 So, the PCOs, when we're discussing it, will
2 always say, "Well, somebody should have, somebody
3 should have piped up and said, 'You know, we ought to
4 come up,' you know, or shout 'five feet or five one
5 feet' or 'let's -- the ship. Okay, Captain? That's a
6 great idea.'" But, on your ship, how are you going to
7 make sure your Officer of the Deck makes that
8 recommendation? That's how we get into it. And one of
9 the things we teach the PCOs is they ought to test
10 their guys.

11 What would be a good way to test it is, you
12 know, go -- before you're piling the ship in or out --
13 for example, this would be one to do it -- before
14 you're piling the ship in or out, tell the XO. Say
15 "Hey, XO, on the turn to course three five seven, it's
16 a right-hand turn and we briefed it's going to be a
17 right fifteen degree rudder, but I'm going to direct
18 the Officer of the Deck to put the rudder over left
19 fifteen" and I will maintain that rudder for ten
20 seconds until either, you know, somebody makes up a
21 strong back-up saying, "Captain, that's the wrong thing

1 to do" or at the ten second point, that's as far as we
2 can go to the left and we'll shift the rudder back to
3 the right.

4 So we'd actually tell the guys to run a drill
5 on the guys, but treat it as a drill. You know, you
6 brief it and you have back-up, so that, even if the
7 Captain screws up, there's someone else who can say,
8 you know, "Hey, Captain, you told me at ten seconds,
9 it's been twelve seconds. You can come right." You
10 know, that type of thing.

11 MR. STRAUCH: What about going out to sea
12 with a critical piece of equipment not functioning?

13 CDR. BRUNER: We talk about that.
14 Specifically, to the Greeneville case as the ADSDO.
15 I'm not sure that's what you're talking about, but
16 that's what I would think you're probably hinting at.
17 The question we always ask the PCOs is okay, Captain,
18 you're getting ready to go out to sea and all of a
19 sudden you're told this critical piece of equipment, in
20 this case the ADSDO is out of commission. What are
21 your choices?

1 So we get them to list, first of all, what
2 are the choices. We can go ahead and go with it,
3 broken and not do anything. We cannot go. We can say
4 it's important enough we're not going to sea without it
5 or we can go to sea with it broken and we can put other
6 measures in place to mitigate that loss of that piece
7 of equipment. You know, those are three choices.

8 Okay, so which one are you going to do?
9 Well, okay, we're going to go to sea and we're going to
10 mitigate the loss of it. That's typically what most
11 guys would say. And that's what I would do too if I
12 was the CO.

13 Okay, well, how are you going to mitigate?
14 What's everything you can do to mitigate the loss of
15 this equipment and what are you going to do, Captain?

16 That's the way we try to pull the string on
17 them. Obviously, as the instructor, you know, we may
18 think up one or two mitigating things that maybe those
19 guys don't because we've thought about it, you know,
20 for me now, four times. Does that answer your
21 question?

1 MR. STRAUCH: Uh-huh. What about changing
2 around watch standers in a way that's not in accordance
3 with the watch bill for that day?

4 CDR. BRUNER: Definitely. We talk about that
5 in a lot of areas. The bottom line is that there is an
6 approved watch bill. There's always an approved watch
7 bill before you get underway. The Greeneville had an
8 approved watch bill. Unfortunately, the guys that were
9 on the watch bill, some of those guys weren't on the
10 ship.

11 This gets into the basic submarining thing
12 that I was trying to talk to. That's just a basic
13 assumption that your watch bill once it's approved
14 doesn't get changed without the approving authority
15 knowing about it and approving that change. So, I
16 mean, that's how we address that. I'll tell the PCOs,
17 "Okay, who's going to approve your watch bill?" The
18 Captain doesn't approve all the watch bills. He
19 approves the Officer's watch bill and he approves the
20 critical maneuvering area watch standers, but he
21 doesn't approve who's going to stand engine, lower

1 level. The Engineer does.

2 But the issue is it doesn't matter whether
3 the Captain approves it or the Engineer approves.
4 Whoever approves the watch bill, if you're going to
5 change the watch bill, you got to go back and get that
6 approval. And so we try to pull the string and,
7 typically, all the guys know that. That's not
8 something new to them. It doesn't take but just a
9 second and they all go well, if you're going to change
10 the watch bill because you're swapping a watch, then
11 you got to change the watch bill, which means it's got
12 to be approved again. It's got to go through the chop
13 chain, the right guys look at it.

14 MR. STRAUCH: Exceeding test depth,
15 classified speed limits and presence of people who
16 don't have clearance?

17 CDR. BRUNER: That's one that I kind of --
18 it's unbelievable that it even happened. I'll just
19 tell you that all the other PCOs, when we go over the
20 brief, they just kind of look at it and they can't
21 believe it because that is classified information and

1 there's absolutely no reason that was done. It didn't
2 gain anything.

3 But the way we talk about it is in terms of
4 risk management, although it's not necessarily a risk.

5 Okay, and this is what we'll do. I'll turn around
6 from the board and I'll say, "Okay, Captain Smith,
7 what's the gain associated with going to test depth
8 with people who aren't cleared on board? Is there a
9 gain associated with that?" And, typically, the guy
10 will say, "Well, maybe it makes that visitor feel like
11 he's done something really special, but other than
12 that, there's no gain."

13 "Okay, what's the risk associated it?" And
14 we'll talk about that. The risk associated with it.
15 And, more importantly in this particular case is what
16 did you give up when you did it? And that's you gave
17 away classified information. So that's the way we
18 address that.

19 MR. STRAUCH: Do you walk them through the
20 decision making process --

21 CDR. BRUNER: We try really --

1 MR. STRAUCH: -- evaluate the costs and
2 benefits?

3 CDR. BRUNER: Exactly. We try to do that in
4 all the things -- you know, there's probably, in the
5 Greeneville case, there's probably fifteen different
6 risk-management areas to look at and the way we do it
7 is, with that particular break, we start out at the day
8 before the ship gets underway and pre-underways are
9 complete and we start talking about that, from that
10 point on. That's when you get into the watch bill. I
11 mean, the watch bill was approved the day before the
12 incident and, let me see, if you got to cover it, you
13 got to start before the actual day of the incident and
14 we talk about that.

15 MR. STRAUCH: What are some of the other
16 things you bring out that we haven't mentioned so far?

17 CDR. BRUNER: Oh, gosh, I'm sure I can't
18 think of all of them. Watch bill is one. The ADSDO is
19 one. How long, you know, scope of employment. How
20 high do you need to go. What's the issue with the sea
21 state. Do you have to go higher for a higher sea

1 state? How do you know what the sea state is? What's
2 your experience on determining sea state? How long do
3 you need to stay on a leg to do TMA using sonar? How
4 long does it take the tracker to begin to track
5 correctly so that the bearing points that you are
6 getting are correct?

7 If you decide that instead of staying on that
8 leg for three minutes, you're only going to stay on
9 that leg for two minutes, what's leading you down that
10 direction? Why do you feel comfortable two minutes is
11 long enough? I don't know if I can think of some
12 others off the top of my head or not.

13 Emergency deep, the drill that the Captain
14 ran. Was it a brief drill? In this case, it wasn't a
15 brief drill. Okay, what was the risk that the Captain
16 bought into by running a drill without proper pre-brief
17 and without proper back-up, without somebody protecting
18 him, in case he screwed up? What are the things that
19 can go wrong in an emergency deep drill? What's the
20 worst thing that can happen? Captain, when you do this
21 emergency deep drill, are you going to do it on your

1 own or are you going to do it with other people?

2 And the answer may not necessarily be that
3 you should never do one on your own, but the answer is
4 what -- you have to understand what the risk is. Have
5 you covered yourself with all those risks?

6 We talk about the high speed and the maximum
7 depth. We talk about allowing visitors to sit on
8 critical watch stations. What's the risk and gain
9 associated with it? What's the worst thing that can
10 happen and if that worst thing happens while that
11 visitor is sitting in the seat, are you prepared for
12 that? How are you mitigating that risk?

13 Those are just a few I can come up with
14 quickly.

15 MR. STRAUCH: And how long do you need to
16 cover all these?

17 CDR. BRUNER: We usually -- it takes about an
18 hour and-a-half to go through the Greeneville
19 collision.

20 MR. STRAUCH: I mean, concerning all the
21 lessons you want to bring out, is that sufficient time?

1 CDR. BRUNER: I think so. I mean, you have
2 to understand that we do this continually and by the
3 time, usually the Greeneville collision is one of the
4 last things we do in the course because we want it to
5 stick with the PCOs and also it offers a culmination of
6 all -- so many different lessons learned. Typically in
7 a case study, we'll get two or three, but we won't get
8 as many as we get for Greeneville.

9 So, we've typically gone through all those,
10 and pieces and parts of other case studies, but it's
11 rare that you can put them -- well, it's the only one
12 that I know of that there is so many in one case study.

13 So, the answer to your question is yes, sir,
14 I think it's enough time.

15 MR. STRAUCH: What are some of the other --
16 among the other case studies that you bring up, do you
17 use the one involving the Houston and the Barcona, that
18 collision?

19 CDR. BRUNER: We cover -- we do. We cover
20 all the collisions and groundings in the Submarine
21 Forces Collision and Grounding Seminar or -- have you

1 seen that? There's a SOBT product call Collisions and
2 Groundings --

3 MR. STRAUCH: I'm sorry. What product?

4 CDR. BRUNER: SOBT. It's Submarine Officer
5 Basic Training and it comes on a CD and it has -- I'm
6 not sure of the exact number, probably ten or twelve
7 collisions and groundings and Greeneville collision was
8 just put on that CD a month or so ago, but we go
9 through each one of those in detail. And that's in
10 addition to our normal case studies.

11 The focus in going over the Greeneville
12 collision, the focus in going over the Houston
13 collision, the focus in going over any number of the
14 collisions or groundings, and there's a lot of other
15 things, the case studies -- like there was a ship that
16 drug anchor. It was anchored and the CO thought the
17 ship had anchored, you know, it was well and truly
18 anchored and it was okay to go on Liberty and the CO
19 and the XO and half the crew went on Liberty and then
20 right after they went on Liberty, the ship began to
21 move because the anchor hadn't set. It started to

1 drag.

2 So, you know, that's another case study that
3 we do, but the focus of all of those is really
4 judgment, more than anything else. We talk about risk
5 management, but risk management goes into the judgment
6 category. I mean, when does the CO have the judgment
7 to say, "We're not going to do this," or "This is okay
8 to do."

9 MR. STRAUCH: Uh-huh. This CD, is that
10 something that's classified?

11 CDR. BRUNER: It is, yes, sir.

12 MR. STRAUCH: One of the issues with trying
13 to teach people risk management is that you're teaching
14 them to evaluate, as I said, the costs and benefits of
15 various decisional terms.

16 CDR. BRUNER: Right.

17 MR. STRAUCH: In a real -- environment, how
18 many times do people really have -- how often do people
19 really have the time to examine costs and benefits of
20 their various options? In my experience, they're lucky
21 to even identify the various options, let alone then

1 going through and identifying the costs and benefits of
2 each one.

3 CDR. BRUNER: I think I would disagree with
4 you. It has a lot to do with experience. For example,
5 a good example is looking at the ADSDO. I don't know
6 if you've actually looked at one or not, but the ADSDO
7 is the sonar display. I've looked at ADSDOs for twenty
8 years now and there are times when I can walk up and
9 just look at it and say, "You know, what do you think
10 that guy's doing?" And whoever, maybe a student, a PCO
11 student, or the primate operator on the ship or the FT,
12 the Fire Control Watch, in the Greeneville's case, will
13 say, "Well, I think he's twelve thousand yards away
14 doing ten knots," and I'll look at it and go "I don't
15 think so."

16 So I just did a risk management decision
17 because I just in my own mind decided that we're
18 getting ready to go to periscope depth. I'm not
19 confident, so we're not going to take that risk
20 associated with going up and instead we're going to
21 stay down at a hundred and fifty feet and we're going

1 to get another leg on the guy.

2 So, I mean, it depends. There are situations
3 where I agree with you, sir, that you probably would
4 need to sit down and kind of scratch your head for a
5 while and go, well, let's think about this. But there
6 are other times when the CO should have enough
7 experience to be able to say, "I think there are some
8 increased risks that I'm not willing to take with this.
9 I'm not doing it right now. We're going to get some
10 more data first."

11 MR. STRAUCH: The thing is experience isn't
12 something you can teach.

13 CDR. BRUNER: No. I mean, you can try and we
14 try hard to teach it, but experience comes with
15 experience, but what we can do is we use the case
16 studies to try to explain to guys how to, with some
17 confidence, make a decision.

18 For example, you're a psychologist. I would
19 like to think that if you gave me a lecture, I would
20 learn something from you during that lecture and
21 without having to go through as much training as you

1 have.

2 So, by the same token, I would like to think
3 that the students learned something from our case
4 studies. I mean, if nothing else, if -- even though
5 they don't -- they're not looking at an ADSDO, all
6 those guys now, when they go to sea, know that if the
7 ADSDO breaks, there's some things they're going to put
8 in place to protect the ship. They're going to make
9 the Officer of the Deck to step into sonar and look at
10 the sonar display in there.

11 They're going to put the -- system in the
12 time bearing notes so they have a quasi-ADSDO that they
13 can look at. They're going to make sure that they do,
14 and who knows, three minute legs on every contact a
15 minimum. They're going to make sure the Captain knows
16 that the ADSDO is out of commission and that, in fact,
17 maybe some COs will tell you they'll station a CDO to
18 provide either the XO or the CO with more seasoned
19 judgment.

20 So, if you know what I'm saying, it's true
21 you can't teach experience, but you can teach guys to

1 have a little bit more of a pucker factor.

2 MR. STRAUCH: Did you know Commander Waddle
3 before?

4 CDR. BRUNER: I've never met him.

5 MR. STRAUCH: Okay, based on what you've
6 heard, if he was in one of your classes as a
7 Prospective CO, do you think anything about him
8 would've stood out?

9 CDR. BRUNER: You put me in a bad spot asking
10 that question. My guess is probably not, but I don't
11 know unless I saw him. I mean, the issue is what
12 you're getting to is a great, in my opinion, is a great
13 focus for a lot of people look at it as how do you
14 measure a guy's judgment? How do you do that?
15 Particularly, how do you do it when you can't put him
16 in the scenario that he's going to be in when his
17 judgment comes into question?

18 Looking at a student that's going to come in,
19 he will not act the same as a Captain in Command for a
20 lot of different reasons. So I don't expect that a man
21 is going to display the same tendencies in the

1 classroom or at sea under the PCO instructor as he
2 would as Captain.

3 MR. STRAUCH: Well, how confident are you
4 that the next Commander Waddle, should there be that
5 kind of person when he came to your class, won't make
6 the same mistakes based on having taken this class?

7 CDR. BRUNER: I think I'm pretty confident.
8 The issue is the crux of me being able to evaluate.
9 The reason it's hard for me is because they understand
10 there's an instructor there and they also understand
11 there's a safety net. Part of my job is to make sure
12 that PCO operations are safe. So, as a result of that,
13 they won't act the same necessarily that they will as a
14 Commanding Officer because it's a whole different
15 ballgame when you truly are the guy responsible and
16 there's nobody there. I mean, having been there for
17 three years, you know, the first time you get underway
18 as a CO and you look around and you're on board this
19 huge submarine and there's nobody there to tell you if
20 you make a mistake or not, it's a big change. So
21 that's the only issue.

1 But now having said that, we have focused
2 hard on those things that the mistakes that were made
3 on board Greeneville that afternoon, we've trained
4 everybody on them. Those same mistakes will not be
5 made again and, if anything, there's a much larger,
6 throughout the submarine force, there's a bigger pucker
7 factor and that's probably not a good term, but there's
8 much, an awful lot of concern at all levels, from the
9 most junior sailor up to the Four Star Admiral, whoever
10 it happens to be. So, I'm pretty confident that we've
11 made the changes required to make sure it won't happen
12 again.

13 MR. STRAUCH: What about the subsequent
14 Greeneville incidents? Do you cover those in a class
15 also?

16 CDR. BRUNER: Except for the -- we do, but
17 the latest one the official investigation is not
18 complete. We do, but it's not into great depth because
19 we don't have the detail.

20 I mean, you know, we hear rumors. I hear
21 rumors a lot because of my job. So I'll go back and in

1 the PCO classroom what's said in there, stays in there.
2 So we talk about rumors too. I'll walk in and say,
3 "Hey, this is what I heard happened. I don't know if
4 it did or not, but if it did, Captain, what would you
5 do to make sure this doesn't happen to you?" That type
6 of thing, but we don't actually have, for the latest
7 one, we don't have any kind of a power point
8 presentation or anything like that. I expect we
9 probably will six months from now, you know, when the
10 final investigation is done and blame is levied
11 appropriately wherever that happens to be.

12 MR. ROTH-ROFFY: You mentioned your
13 background is on trident submarines. You're a CO on a
14 trident submarine?

15 CDR. BRUNER: Uh-huh. I'm evenly split.

16 MR. ROTH-ROFFY: Do you know of any
17 difference in procedural aspects regarding going to
18 periscope depth that vary between the tridents and the
19 attack submarines? Anything that comes to mind?

20 CDR. BRUNER: A trident goes to periscope
21 depth, it prepares, at a hundred and sixty feet. Six

1 eighty-eight is a hundred and fifty feet and the reason
2 is because the trident is so much bigger. To keep the
3 sail deeper than a deep draft merchant, it's got to --
4 to be deeper.

5 MR. ROTH-ROFFY: In terms of TMA procedures?

6 CDR. BRUNER: No. Typically, a six eighty-
7 eight -- systems are better than -- they're newer than
8 a trident, but the basics are all the same.

9 MR. ROTH-ROFFY: The students that complete
10 the PCO course, do they all eventually take command of
11 a submarine?

12 CDR. BRUNER: No. Most of them do. One or
13 two students per class typically are assigned to be
14 deputies at Squadrons. They're guys that are senior
15 enough and have the experience to be Commanding
16 Officers, but merely because we don't have enough
17 submarine billets, they didn't quite make that cut to
18 get into that CO group. So we teach them in the class
19 so that they have the same background as the Captains
20 when they go out there, but, in fact, most of those
21 guys never get to go to sea as a CO. So ten or fifteen

1 percent of the guys don't.

2 MR. ROTH-ROFFY: And there's also some kind
3 of a category of PCO graduates that are kind of in a
4 waiting status and we heard about this a couple days
5 ago, CSS something?

6 CDR. BRUNER: Yeah, that's the deputies. The
7 deputies that come through are -- what happens is every
8 year the Summary Screening Board -- Board meets and
9 they'll pick some number, you know, twenty guys maybe,
10 -- last look for whatever the year group is up, they
11 pick fifteen guys that are called COSS guys. And,
12 typically, the top half of those guys go to PCO school
13 and they get taught by me and by the guys at Naval --
14 teaching too. And then, they may or may not go to
15 command. Historically, they have less of a chance of
16 going to command than -- it's less than fifty percent
17 that they go on, but the reason that they would go on
18 the command would be if a guy were to have a medical
19 problem, which happens maybe once a year, you know, if
20 a guy is in command and has a heart attack, then he has
21 to be relieved so the deputy will step in. Or if a guy

1 gets relief for cause, which has happened, obviously
2 Scott Waddle, then one of the deputies would go in
3 there and take his place typically.

4 MR. ROTH-ROFFY: What percentage of
5 Commanders are selected for command, to go to PCO
6 school? Do you have any statistics on that?

7 CDR. BRUNER: It's a pretty stiff cut. I'll
8 give you my year group because I know what my year
9 group is, but all my year group peers are out of
10 command now, I think. There might be one or two left,
11 but I was commissioned in 1981 and about half of all
12 the department heads that were in my year group, fifty
13 percent, went to XO and then fifty percent of the XOs
14 went to CO.

15 So, if you look at it from that way, from the
16 time you're a Lieutenant Commander Department Head to
17 the time you get to command, you have a one in four
18 chance of getting there. And that doesn't include
19 anything between your junior officer and your
20 department head tours. I just don't know any numbers
21 associated with that part.

1 MR. ROTH-ROFFY: Do the students in your
2 course, do they have to take some kind of a written
3 exam to demonstrate their proficiency --

4 CDR. BRUNER: Uh-huh.

5 MR. ROTH-ROFFY: -- and principles that
6 you've taught them? Is that -- does that come at the
7 end as like a final exam?

8 CDR. BRUNER: It comes at the end of the
9 classroom phase before we go to sea. They actually
10 have two written tests; one is a Rules of the Road Exam
11 and we use the Coast Guard Rules of the Road Exam. We
12 have, I think it's like a thousand question bank that
13 we got from the Coast Guard. It's the same thing they
14 use, and we pick fifty questions at random out of that
15 and they have to pass that and they also have to pass a
16 written, it's about a four hour written exam and we,
17 typically, give it to them the Friday before we get
18 underway the next week and they do it over the weekend,
19 complete the exam, and then we grade it while we're at
20 sea.

21 MR. ROTH-ROFFY: So, is that like an essay-

1 type exam where they have --

2 CDR. BRUNER: Yeah, it's not multiple
3 choices. It's a pretty tough exam.

4 MR. ROTH-ROFFY: You mentioned that you had
5 twelve, fifteen case studies that you looked at during
6 your course. Are those --

7 CDR. BRUNER: Yeah. We don't look at all --
8 what happens is we have twelve or fifteen, thirteen,
9 fourteen, to choose from. We assign one case study to
10 every PCO and then he has to go do the research and
11 present it to the class and, of course, the instructors
12 are sitting in the back and we already have been
13 through it many times so we help them if they miss
14 something.

15 MR. ROTH-ROFFY: And where do they do that
16 research?

17 CDR. BRUNER: We have all the case documents.
18 We have all the Jagnet investigations. We have the
19 endorsements that are written on it. We give them that
20 material and then they have to dig through it to find
21 all the details out themselves. You know, it's just a

1 tool that we use to try to make them learn. Rather
2 than have me tell them everything, they have to
3 actually get in there and find it out on their own.

4 MR. ROTH-ROFFY: So the students present the
5 cases and then do the rest of the students in the class
6 then ask questions about the case?

7 CDR. BRUNER: It's a seminar-type format.
8 It's not like a power point presentation where I would
9 get up and talk to you about this is the diving
10 procedure. It's more like I described the Greeneville
11 case study. The only difference is that I present the
12 Greeneville collision.

13 MR. ROTH-ROFFY: Of the case studies, how
14 many of those involve tactical issues as opposed to
15 strictly safety or ship handling issues? For example,
16 I'm sure you do a lot of classified case studies that
17 involve encounters with other submarines or classified
18 missions.

19 CDR. BRUNER: About -- I mean, I've never
20 looked at the numbers, but I would say roughly half of
21 them. They're all safety issues, but the issue is

1 where did it happen and what was the submarine doing.

2 MR. ROTH-ROFFY: I think that's about all I
3 have for right now. Barry, do you have any further
4 questions?

5 MR. STRAUCH: Yeah, just a couple follow-up
6 questions. Do you go over DB cruises in the class?

7 CDR. BRUNER: Uh-huh.

8 MR. STRAUCH: And what kinds of issues do you
9 bring out with regard to DB cruises?

10 CDR. BRUNER: What is appropriate and what is
11 not appropriate to do during a DB cruise and whose
12 decision is it to do a DB cruise? Whose permission
13 they ought to have. Whose authorization you have to
14 have to have visitors on board? If you have a
15 dependence cruise, which is a different animal and one
16 of the dependents could be considered a distinguished
17 visitor, is it a DB cruise or is it a -- cruise? I
18 think those are probably, in the generic way, those are
19 the main things we cover.

20 MR. STRAUCH: Now, of those, the evolutions
21 that are okay to do and those that aren't, has that

1 changed since the Greeneville collision?

2 CDR. BRUNER: In actuality, I would say the
3 answer is no, but you have to remember that what was
4 done on Greeneville was not okay. I mean, I have done
5 in command, I probably did four or five DB cruises
6 while I was a CO and we never did any of that stuff
7 because I knew better than to do it. I mean, you can't
8 give away classified information and you can't, you
9 know, I would never put a guy on a helm or standing
10 chief of watch when the ship was doing anything. I
11 just wouldn't do it because what if something happened.
12 You want a guy that knows what to do there.

13 So, I guess, the answer to your question is
14 it has changed because we talk about it and we make
15 sure people have judgment in that area, but it was
16 never okay to do it prior to doing it, if you
17 understand what I'm saying. Am I making any sense?

18 MR. STRAUCH: Uh-huh. When you were a CO,
19 you said you had four DB cruises?

20 CDR. BRUNER: I'm not sure, but four or five.

21 MR. STRAUCH: Do you enjoy doing them?

1 CDR. BRUNER: Yeah, sure. I love the chance
2 to show -- really it wasn't so much the ship I loved to
3 show off as the crew. You know, I love to brag on the
4 guys, you know and say, "This is your tax dollar at
5 work. Have you ever seen an eighteen year old seaman
6 with as much, or an eighteen year old person with as
7 much responsibility as this man right here?" You know,
8 that kind of thing.

9 MR. STRAUCH: So what did you do differently
10 than Commander Waddle did? You mentioned the
11 classified information, but what else would you have
12 done --

13 CDR. BRUNER: Well, one of the things I never
14 did was I always stayed in the control room throughout
15 the DB cruises. We call them VIP cruises. Same thing.
16 And the reason was is because we had visitors on board
17 and there was a chance that something could go wrong
18 and I wanted to be in the controlling station. I did
19 not have a group of people that I carried around. My
20 XO did not have a group of people. His job and my job
21 was to make sure that the ship was operated safely.

1 And, on more than occasion, I've either kicked people
2 out of the control room or, on a number of occasions,
3 I've said, "Everybody listen up, please. This is the
4 Captain. It's getting too noisy in here. We can't
5 hear any orders that are being given. Please keep it
6 down," you know.

7 That's an example, but that's the big thing
8 is I did not become involved in the DB cruise in terms
9 of actually doing anything for them, other than to make
10 sure that the ship was operated safely. I mean, that
11 was my job that day. And I understood that it does
12 make a difference if you have a lot of people standing
13 around for lots of different reasons.

14 It's a different routine. The watch standers
15 maybe, instead of focused on whatever their job is, is
16 looking up at whoever this VIP is, whoever it would
17 happen to be. You know, this is a senator, a T.V.
18 cameraman, and you know, is he getting me on camera?
19 And it's my job that that kind of stuff doesn't happen
20 and that the guys do their job. That's what the
21 Captain is supposed to do.

1 MR. STRAUCH: What is the most number of
2 people you took out on any one of these cruises? Most
3 number of visitors? And I don't mean family cruises.

4 CDR. BRUNER: Yeah, family cruises are a
5 larger number. I think the most number of VIPs, to be
6 honest with you, sir, I'm going to guess because I
7 can't remember. I've been out of command for a year
8 now, but probably twenty to twenty-five. So that's my
9 best guess. I mean, if you would have asked me a year
10 and-a-half ago right after I've done one, I could have
11 told you twenty-three because I knew exactly, but I'm
12 just thinking about the number of guys I saw walking
13 around the ship. Probably twenty or twenty-five.

14 MR. STRAUCH: I'd like to put it in
15 perspective. The control room of a trident is much
16 larger than a control of a Los Angeles class?

17 CDR. BRUNER: It is, but we also split the
18 people up. We never had that many in the control room.
19 You know, we would have seven or eight, maybe ten,
20 people in the control room at a time because you got to
21 give the watch standers -- they got to be able to get

1 around and they've got to be able to do their job. And
2 a trident is a lot bigger than a six eighty-eight.

3 MR. STRAUCH: So twenty to twenty-five isn't
4 really a fair comparison?

5 CDR. BRUNER: Correct.

6 MR. STRAUCH: But is the control room the
7 same dimensions?

8 CDR. BRUNER: No, it's a lot bigger on the
9 trident.

10 MR. STRAUCH: And even then, you're only
11 limited to seven or eight people in the control room of
12 the trident?

13 CDR. BRUNER: Probably ten. We would split
14 it up. Maybe even twelve because I would guess that we
15 probably -- we always split the groups up and what we
16 would do is we would allow one group to be there when
17 we submerged the ship and then a different group to be
18 there when we surfaced the ship, so that each
19 distinguished visitor got to see something besides
20 just, you know, hot, straight, normal.

21 MR. STRAUCH: And this is something you

1 developed or someone told you do it this way?

2 CDR. BRUNER: I didn't develop it, but
3 predominantly, that's the way the submarine was doing
4 it when I got there and we pretty much continued to do
5 it that same way. There was one time when we were
6 going to get the ship underway to go out and do sea
7 trials and they wanted to send a VIP cruise on board
8 and I called the Commodore and said I don't want to do
9 that. That was the first time we had been to sea for
10 three months; I do not want any riders on board. And
11 he said, "You're absolutely right." And so we didn't
12 take them with us.

13 MR. STRAUCH: And you weren't worried about
14 getting into trouble for turning it down?

15 CDR. BRUNER: No, I don't -- seriously, I
16 don't think there's a Commodore out there that if the
17 CO says, "I believe this is a safety issue. I don't
18 want to do it," there's not a Commodore out there who's
19 going to say, "Wrong answer. We're going to do it."
20 Because, if to no other reason, they know that if
21 something were to happen and it came out that the CO

1 said, "I don't feel comfortable with this," and the
2 Commodore overrode him, I mean, their career would be
3 over with. If, for no other reason, I'm sure there's
4 no Commodores that would do that, but I think that most
5 guys, you know, it's more than that. In their heart of
6 hearts they want to do what's right, so it's not just
7 self-preservation.

8 MR. ROTH-ROFFY: Okay, well, I guess, that's
9 all the questions we have for you, Commander. We
10 certainly appreciate you coming down to talk with us.

11 CDR. BRUNER: Okay.

12 MR. ROTH-ROFFY: So it's about fourteen
13 minutes after four and that concludes our interview of
14 Cdr. Bruner.

15 (Whereupon, the interview of Commander Bruner
16 was concluded at 4:14 p.m.)